

# The Semaphore

A PUBLICATION OF TELEGRAPH HILL DWELLERS



**Peter Macchiarini 1909-2001**

# TELEGRAPH HILL DWELLERS

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**Cover:** Peter Macchiarini, photo by Ed Brooks



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# THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

By Gerry Crowley

Being president of Telegraph Hill Dwellers has some special perks. In June, I was privileged to speak on THD's behalf before the Planning Commission in support of the City Lights Bookstore's nomination for Landmark status. The case had previously received the blessing of the Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board.

The Planning Commission's unanimous favorable vote was followed in July by another unanimous vote of the Board of Supervisors. City Lights owner Lawrence Ferlinghetti and his business partner, Nancy Peters, were pleased to



accept the honor of receiving the designation as San Francisco Landmark Number 228. They also agreed that THD's offer of a celebration was an irresistible idea. Social Chair Suzanne Nelson is organizing a celebratory block party to be held in Jack Kerouac Alley at Columbus Avenue on September 30th.

A petition to the City for Landmark status requires extensive research and thorough documentation in the form of a case report. The report for City Lights was a labor of love prepared by Nancy Peters of City Lights, Mrs. G. Bland Platt, historic preservation consultant (known to her friends as Gee Gee); and Nancy Shanahan, THD director, Planning and Zoning Chair, landmarks attorney, and Director of the North Beach Historical Project. Anyone with keen interest in the history of our neighborhood and City Lights

*continued on p. 5*

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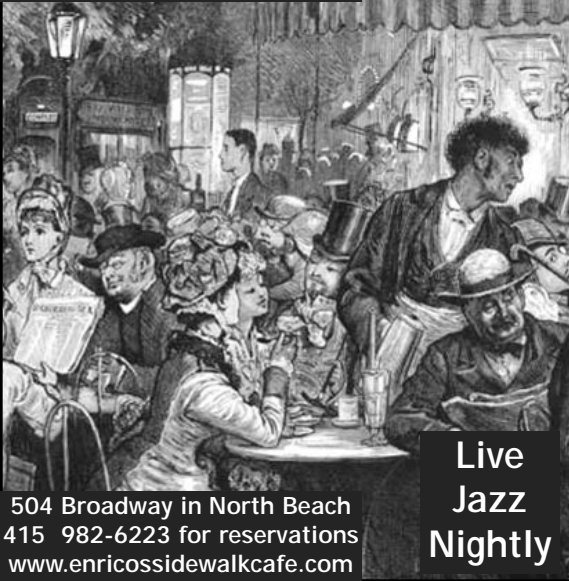


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## PRESIDENT'S CORNER

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in particular may obtain a copy of the case report by contacting Nancy Shanahan at 986-7070.

While on the subject of City Lights Bookstore, as you know, Telegraph Hill Dwellers and City Lights Publishing are co-publishing the revised edition of David Myrick's very special book *San Francisco's Telegraph Hill*. The original edition was published in 1972 and for many years since then THD members have been clamoring for a second printing. When THD received a bequest from the late Jack Early, then-president Aaron Peskin contacted author Davis Myrick, now residing in his home town of Santa Barbara. David enthusiastically agreed to the re-publishing with additional pages of text and photographs and the project was born.

Member Larry Habegger, no stranger to world of book publishing, represented the Dwellers on the project. This summer, I became involved as the finishing touches took place and now know about such things as selecting book cover material and selecting the weight and sheen of paper. Most recently, there were meetings to finalize the costs of production and shipping. Discounts, layout, quantity, royalties, agreements and storage were also discussed. Former president Joe Luttrell provided legal counsel. Acclaimed photographer, author and THD member Morton Beebe donated the photograph which will adorn the book jacket. The rewards should be realized when we receive our copies of *San Francisco's Telegraph Hill* in early October.

Summer brought us the fabulous North Beach Jazz Festival. The opening concert at Coit Tower was more special than ever because of the appearance of Carlos Santana. Each year I see more THD members attending the opening, and this year many of us attended Jazz on Grant in

great numbers after our warm-up cocktail party at Babette. The highlight of the evening for me was listening to the flugelhorn of Dmitri Metheny and the piano of Darrell Grant at the Shrine of St. Francis of Assisi. They played Ellington and others with the reverence deserved in the setting of such a beautiful church. THD sends it appreciation to Festival founders Alistair Monroe and Herve Ernest, who invited us to a wonderful pre-festival party at the San Francisco Italian Athletic Club and sent us home with complimentary tickets to Jazz on Coit.

THD member Franc Harriss is now managing the Italian Athletic Club and marketing new ideas for events at the club. THDers may be interested in an evening of entertainment by Filippo Voltaggio, who sings both American and Italian songs. He will appear in 2 shows each on October 12th and 26th. The 6:00 p.m. dinner show is \$65 and the 8:00 p.m. show is \$35 per person. Call 781-0166 for information. Social Chair Suzanne Nelson and I toured the club's new Parkview Room, where THD will have a cocktail party in the fall. The room is on the 3rd floor over the post office, overlooking Washington Square Park, and received rave reviews from Suzanne and me.

In other news around Washington Square, the parish of Sts. Peter and Paul welcomes the Reverend John Molloy, its new pastor. Father Molloy, a Berkeley native, is returning home after serving most recently in British Columbia. THD looks forward to a continuing relationship with the parish and its generosity in providing us a site for community events.

Mark McLeod of Enrico's Sidewalk Cafe on Broadway has generously offered Telegraph Hill Dwellers a 50% discount on food until October 31 at Sunday Jazz Brunch and Sunday Jazz

*continued on page 7*

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# PLANNING AND ZONING COMMITTEE REPORT

By Nancy Shanahan

## I. TELEGRAPH HILL HISTORIC DISTRICT

*This historic district on the east side of Telegraph Hill was established in 1986 to preserve the largest group of pre-1870 structures in the City.*

**224 Filbert Steps.** Proposed changes to this 1859 Gothic Revival Cottage will be the subject of a Landmarks Board hearing in August.

**15 Napier Lane.** The Landmarks Board approved proposed changes to this 1879 Italianate Cottage with conditions to ensure that the historic features of the building will be preserved and that the wooden walkways and stairs and the landscaped areas along the Lane will be protected.

**290 Union Street.** At a Planning Commission hearing on a request for Discretionary Review, the Planning Commission agreed with THD and adjacent neighbors that the project as built differs substantially

from the design that was previously reviewed and approved by the Landmarks Board and Planning Commission. The nonconforming features include include excess building height, a projecting balcony at the 4th floor rear constructed in front of its adjoining neighbor's windows, and the scale and materials of the cornice and window casings and heads on the front facade. The Commission took an action requiring the project sponsor to bring the project into conformance with the former approval.

## II. NORTH BEACH NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL DISTRICT

*In 1987, the North Beach Neighborhood Commercial District Ordinance was adopted to maintain the character of and mix of businesses in North Beach.*

**1438 Grant Avenue (Savoy Tivoli).** The Alcoholic Beverage Commission (ABC) has determined that the current liquor license held by the Savoy Tivoli is

*continued on next page*

## PRESIDENT'S CORNER *continued from page 5*

Dinner. Just identify yourself as a THD member to the wait staff. Enrico's has an excellent reputation for food and entertainment. Not only is Enrico's an advertiser in *The Semaphore* but Mark has also joined as a member.

Longtime Hill Dwellers have been asking

about the date of our about-to-be-reinstated annual picnic at Pioneer Park at Coit Tower. Unfortunately, the newly installed grass needs a winter's worth of attention before we can set the feet of our members upon it. I promise that we'll picnic together in 2002, possibly in the spring instead of the fall.

With so many exciting events planned for fall and winter, I hope that all members with email addresses have given them to Tom Noyes, our membership chair at [tom@noyesfamily.com](mailto:tom@noyesfamily.com). So often we have last minute news or invitations to extend to our members that time does not permit a mailing. See you around the 'hood.

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## PLANNING AND ZONING COMMITTEE REPORT *continued*

no longer valid because the license had been issued as a restaurant license and the establishment is no longer serving food, but operating exclusively as a bar. The owner of the Savoy Tivoli appealed this determination and has successfully delayed the hearing on the matter for more than six months while the bar continues to operate without a valid license. This is a separate matter from the one that was protested by numerous nearby residents—the issuance of a new license as a bar without food service—and must be resolved before ABC can consider whether to issue the new license issue. Protests against the new liquor license are related to the excessive noise emanating from the open-air patio bar and pool hall at this establishment.

### III. PROJECTS ON THE NE WATERFRONT

*Nan Roth represents THD on Port Advisory Groups and at Port Commission hearings.*

**Piers 27-29.** The Port Commission's 3-2 vote to award exclusive negotiation rights to the Mills Corporation for the development of these piers will be the subject of hearings before the Board of Supervisors, which has expressed concern over the process used by the Port Commission in making its selection and decried the use of "misleading, campaign-style tactics and politicking" by developers trying to win approval for Port projects. The Mills Corporation is the Virginia shopping mall developer that Mayor Brown supported as the developer of a mall at Candlestick Point near the proposed new 49ers football stadium.

**Affordable Housing Project (at Broadway and Battery).** THD is continuing to work with the project sponsor, Chinatown Community Development Corporation (CCDC), to ensure a high-quality, compatible design for this highly visible site on Broadway, located at the base of Telegraph Hill in the NE Waterfront Historic District. This historic warehouse district, established by the Board of Supervisors in 1983, is bounded by The Embarcadero, Sansome, Broadway, and Union Streets.

**Proposed Hotel Project (at the Embarcadero and Broadway).** Stanford Hotel, the Port's chosen developer for this site, is continuing its efforts to gain

approval for its proposal to build a large hotel at his key location in the NE Waterfront Historic District. THD's Board has questioned the appropriateness of hotel use at this site and expressed serious concerns with the proposal's height, size, massing, style, materials, bridge over Davis Street, incompatibility with the historic district, and its failure to relate to the contour of Telegraph Hill.

**Proposed National Register Nomination of Northern Waterfront Historic District.** The Port Commission has authorized the issuance of a Request for Proposals (RFP) to procure the services of an architectural historian to prepare the historic district nomination for the Northern Waterfront Historic District. This RFP is the result of more than two years of coordinated effort by THD, San Francisco Tomorrow, San Francisco Architectural Heritage, and countless members of the public to procure the listing of the Northern Waterfront on the National Register of Historic Places.

### IV. JACKSON SQUARE HISTORIC DISTRICT

*Established in 1972, this is the City's first historic district. The district is also listed on the National Register of Historic Places.*

**722-724 and 726-728 Montgomery Street (Belli Building).** In spite of the City Attorney's lawsuit filed in April of this year against the owner for allowing these two 1850s landmark buildings (City Landmarks No. 9 and 10) in the Jackson Square Historic District to be "demolished by neglect," nothing has been done to stabilize and protect these buildings from further deterioration. The owner, Nancy Ho-Belli, who serves on the Landmarks Board as an appointee of Mayor Brown, removed the roofs from the structures several years ago exposing them to weather and deterioration.

### V. MISC. PROJECTS

**North Beach Public Housing Development (bounded by Columbus, Bay, Mason and Francisco).** This joint project of HUD, SF Housing Authority and BRIDGE Housing Corp., to demolish the existing structures and replace them with 360 townhouses, has experienced a year's delay related



## PLANNING AND ZONING COMMITTEE REPORT *continued*

to funding. THD has been working with the project sponsors to encourage greater design compatibility of the new structures with the surrounding neighborhood and has expressed its concern that demolition of the structures not proceed until all necessary funding and approvals are in place.

**391 Filbert (Filbert Steps at Kearny).** The Zoning Administrator has granted a variance from the rear yard requirements of the Planning Code to allow the expansion of this cottage located on the Filbert Steps, specifically conditioned upon the preservation of the windows of the adjacent building to the east. In addition, the owner and his architect are committed to working closely with the Planning & Zoning Committee to ensure that the final design of this project will be compatible with its sensitive site.

**368 Vallejo Street.** A rear yard variance granted by the Zoning Administrator, allowing for construction of a below-grade room to occupy the entire rear yard area, was appealed by adjoining neighbors concerned with potential damage to their foundations from

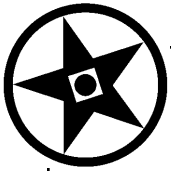
such construction activity. The Board of Appeals upheld the variance. THD has encouraged the project sponsor to reach agreement with her adjoining neighbors on the issues of liability and damages and to retain the existing facade or otherwise ensure design compatibility with the surrounding neighborhood per the City's Residential Design Guidelines.

## VI. NEW CITY LANDMARKS

**City Lights Bookstore.** City Lights Bookstore has now been officially designated as City Landmark #228. If anyone would like a copy of the case report detailing the history of City Lights, please contact me at [nshan@mindspring.com](mailto:nshan@mindspring.com).

**1338 Filbert Street Cottages (Bush Cottages).** With the support of the Russian Hill Neighbors and THD, the Board of Supervisors is considering the designation of this set of 1907 cottages as a City Landmark. These cottages are significant not only for their cultural role in the City's art history and connection to

*continued on page 22*



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# Beautification Committee Goes for the Shine

*By Jan Holloway*

**T**he Beautification Committee continued its assault on trash and litter by working with the Department of Public Works to promote its District 3 August Community Cleanup event. We want to thank the THD Board and several other THDers who distributed hundreds of flyers about the "ecoblitz," as well as the members who have signed up to be block captains. We hope that our bulletins have generated both enthusiasm and calls to 28-CLEAN, the city's hotline to report dumped trash, graffiti, and other public litter nuisances. We believe there is an improvement in the condition of our neighborhood streets.

We continue to be impressed with the City's commitment to deal with the ever-increasing amount of trash and graffiti impacting every corner of San Francisco. Both DPW and the Beautification Committee strongly encourage all of you to call 28-CLEAN to report all of the litter and graffiti problems that you see. It would be helpful if you also monitor the success of the calls. Although results have been outstanding thus far, please report problems to the committee.

We plan to expand our beautification efforts by targeting a few new neighborhood improvement projects. Please join us. Call me at 398-2055 or send me an e-mail at

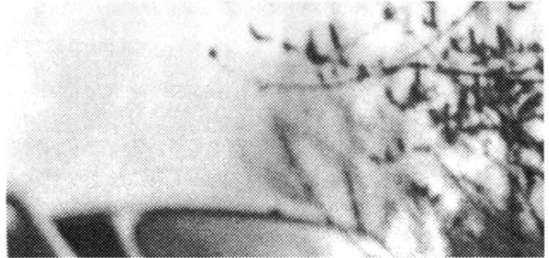
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# The Compound

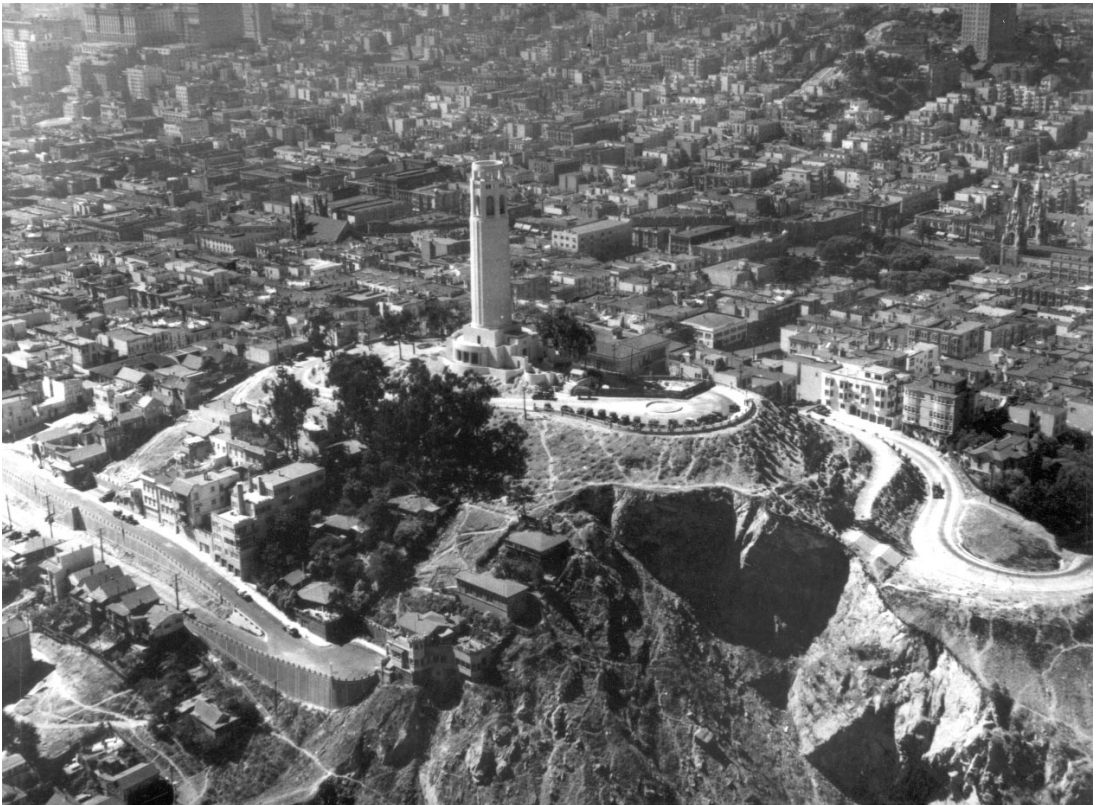
By Mark Bittner

At this year's North Beach Fair, the THD booth was selling a photograph of special interest to me. It's an old aerial view taken circa 1936 of the summit and northeastern side of Telegraph Hill. What I find most intriguing about the photograph is that it shows the house in which I currently live—the former home of Desmond and Valetta Heslet.

It often surprises me how few hill residents know of the Heslets. Valetta Heslet was, after all, the daughter of Grace Marchant. And it could be

argued that Valetta is even more responsible than her famous mother for the presence of the magnificent gardens that line the Filbert and Greenwich Steps. But the Heslets' contributions to the life here went beyond the gardens. They are behind much of Telegraph Hill's unique spirit.

To the first Europeans who saw it, Telegraph Hill was a big mound of rock, sand, and grass. With the advent of the Gold Rush, San Francisco developed into a major port. In order to provide ballast for empty, departing ships, the east side of the hill became riddled with quarries. Soon the hill was covered with a patchwork of immigrant working class neighborhoods. Some of the houses were small, cheaply built



An aerial view of Telegraph Hill circa 1936. *Photo donated by Coit Services, Inc. and is available for \$20. Proceeds benefit Pioneer Park. See the last paragraph of this article for details on how to order.*

## The Compound *continued from previous page*

cottages that served primarily as places to flop for merchant seamen and longshoremen.

Around 1932, the Heslets moved from Los Angeles to San Francisco. The Great Depression was going strong and they'd heard that San Francisco was a good place to find work. At the time, Valetta was a dancer for RKO Studios and Desmond was a commercial artist. (You can still see his work: Desmond designed the Challenge Butter logo.) Not long after their arrival, Desmond found a job in the art department at the *San Francisco Examiner*. This allowed the Heslets to buy the compound of cottages at 235 Greenwich. The previous owner, a Mr. Myer, sold it to them for \$14,000 on the condition that they not kick out or raise

the rents on the merchant seamen and longshoremen already living there. The photograph I've been studying was taken around the time the Heslets bought the compound. The photo shows old cottages, empty lots, foot paths, the recently completed Coit Tower, Julius' Castle, and the stark outlines of an old quarry. It's a rather barren landscape. And while there are some trees, there are no gardens.

Exactly when all the gardening began has been forgotten. It seems that at some point in the mid-to-late-1930s, Valetta started planting the area immediately surrounding her house. But the massive garden across the Greenwich Steps from the Heslet compound was probably not begun until after World War II. (The land is



The Compound in 2001

PHOTO BY MARK BITTNER

## The Compound *continued*

city property.) Telegraph Hill is naturally sandy and rocky, so much of the soil that one sees along the Greenwich Steps today was brought up by Valetta, bag by bag. It was a project that occupied her for decades. As near as I can tell, Valleta's mother, Grace Marchant, moved up from Los Angeles in the late 1940s, and the two then began working together. The gardens along the Filbert and Greenwich Steps can be seen as extensions of Golden Gate Park, since Valetta and Grace often went there surreptitiously to cut slips that they brought back to the hill for planting.

As they worked separately and together in their respective gardens (Valetta along the Greenwich Steps, Grace along the Filbert Steps), Desmond busied himself in the compound at 235 Greenwich. Over time, his crew of inherited tenants died or moved away, and he remodeled the cottages as they became free. Most of the buildings consisted of nothing more than a row of narrow and completely separate rooms that Desmond referred to as "stalls." Outhouses were the norm. He tore down walls, combined rooms, put in plumbing, and then rented out the improved, larger units to tenants of his own choosing.

Desmond once told me that he and Valetta made no special effort to rent to artists. But given that they were both artistically inclined, it was natural that many, if not most, of their tenants were people who in one way or another worked with the arts. Besides being a dancer, Valetta also played the piano. She even had a Steinway baby grand piano brought down the Greenwich Steps and installed in the house where it still sits today. After putting in her daily four to five hours in the garden, Valetta ate lunch and then played music

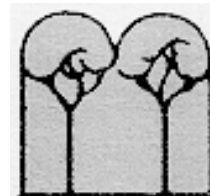
for an hour or more. Mozart and Beethoven were her favorites. She also had an upright piano for parties. And there were lots of those! People in the Heslet compound were not passive when it came to their own entertainment. They put on concerts, plays, and folk dances.

I think the most remarkable quality of the Heslet compound is that it wasn't as much about landlords and tenants as it was about family. They made real friendships with their tenants. In one case, a long-term tenant moved out and left the place to a friend. Fifteen years later, when the friend moved out and another person wanted to rent the unit, the Heslets insisted on checking with the original tenant to make sure that she didn't still want it. They were not interested in getting rich. And they tended to look down on people who desired luxury, referring to them as

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## Compound *continued*

“steam heaters.” As Shawn Hall, a long-time tenant and friend, told me, life with the Heslets was about “good conversation, sharing the garden, and sharing a meal.”

The 1990s brought an end to the glory years of the Heslet compound. In 1993 or '94 Valetta suffered an incapacitating stroke. No one ever took up her work. By the time she died in 1995, at age 86, the garden had become a jungle. In 1998, the city shut off the water. Since then it has reverted to a wild state. The carpet of baby tears that once covered the grounds is dead; weeds and blackberry vines have smothered most of her plants. Desmond hoped that, just as there are now the Grace Marchant Gardens, there would one day be the Valetta Heslet Gardens. He died in 1998 without that coming to pass. Yet even though Valetta's original creation is barely

visible, it serves today as rich habitat for many different species of birds—including a flock of parrots with which I happen to be familiar.

*If you would like an 8 x 10 copy of the old Telegraph Hill photograph mentioned in this article, there are some available. Price: \$20 each. Send checks to 1440 Montgomery St., SE CA, 94133. Make checks out to “Friends of Rec and Park.” Be sure to include your address. All proceeds go to the Pioneer Park restoration project.*

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## From the Desk of Supervisor Peskin

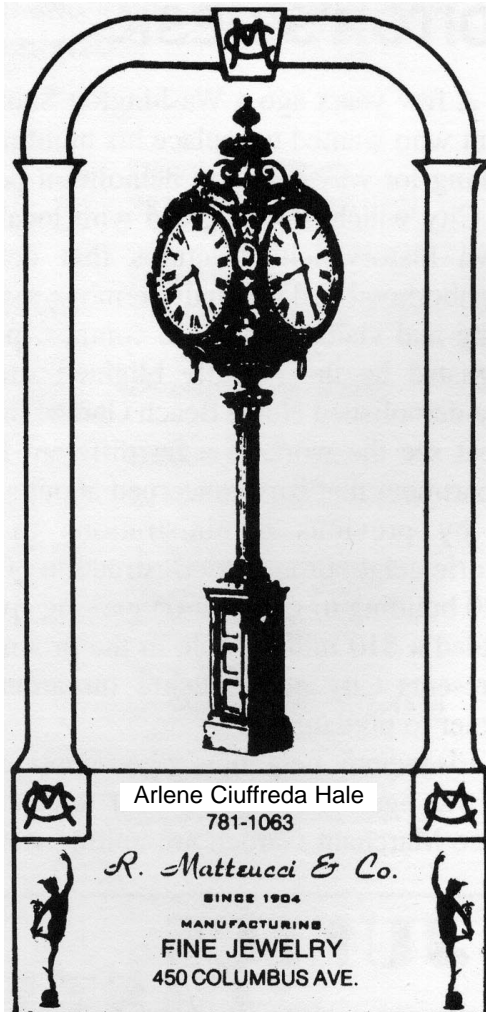
I trust you all enjoyed the summer. Summer as it turns out is the busiest time at City Hall. June is the time for reviewing the City's budget and for introducing amendments to the City's all-mighty charter. I survived (and even enjoyed) presiding over my first budget as vice-chair of the Board's Finance Committee.

Thanks to the recently introduced District Elections, the Board of Supes is ensuring that public funds are going to tangible, unprecedented improvements to local neighborhoods. I've worked hard to see that tax dollars translate into real neighborhood improvements. While the Board concentrated on citywide initiatives I also made sure to look after District 3's needs. A few of the items on the laundry list for District 3 include:

- \$80,000 to the Telegraph Hill Neighborhood Center for after school youth tutoring and other programs.
- \$1,260,000 for new pedestrian signaling and street improvements on Columbus Ave.
- \$75,000 in funding to repair the Greenwich stairs between Coit Tower and Montgomery Street.
- \$28,000 for installation of lights on the Francisco Street stairs.
- A pilot program that will put more Parking Control Officers in the District at night to discourage parking on sidewalks and at intersections.
- An extra gardener to maintain District 3 parks, including Washington Square, Portsmouth Square and Pioneer Park.
- \$50,000 to North Beach Citizens, a local community group that works with homeless in North Beach to help get them off the street.
- A bilingual Social Worker at the Public Health Center in Chinatown for the first time to provide health care to non-English speaking local residents.
- \$50,000 for Chinese Newcomer Services.
- \$20,000 to the Gum Moon Women's Resource Center to augment their transitional housing program for abused women.

The current Board, aside from insuring that city funds go to the neighborhoods, has also addressed several citywide concerns that are not included in the Mayor's proposed budget. This action includes reallocating \$5 million to combat the health care crisis at SF General Hospital, directing almost \$1 million to tree planting on City Streets, and allocating an additional \$1 million to youth education programs throughout the City. The budget was yet

*continued on next page*



## SUPERVISOR PESKIN'S REPORT *continued*

another place where the Mayor and I have locked horns on his use of "Special Assistants" throughout City government. In the budget hearings, I called for review of all Special Assistants positions, including demonstrated progress toward reclassifying legitimate positions into the Civil Service—which means that employees would have minimum qualifications, be hired through a competitive selection process, and would be protected from politics. Towards those ends, I have reserved half of Special Assistants salaries in next year's budget to review how progress is being made in six months, and to make sure that City government follows up on this effort.

On another note, the Bay Fill Charter Amendment that I introduced, which would require a public vote on development projects that would fill

over 100 acres of the Bay, looks like it is headed for the November ballot. The whole idea behind this proposal is to let the community, not a handful of unelected political appointees, determine the future of the Bay.

As always, feel free to be in touch with my office or to drop by and if you're in City Hall. Our phone number is 554-7450 and e-mail is [aaron\\_peskin@ci.sf.ca.us](mailto:aaron_peskin@ci.sf.ca.us). See you around the neighborhood.

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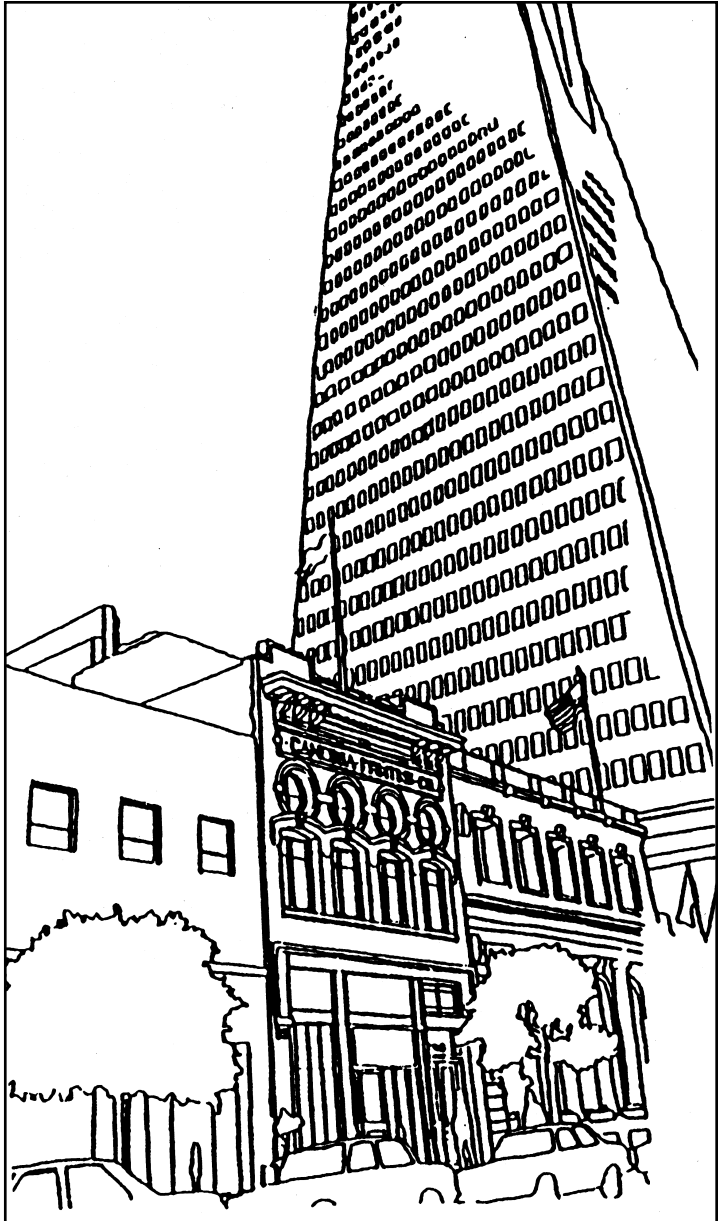
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# Those peripatetic Overmires (Peter and Rozell) did Paris in June with Vera

## Over the Backyard Fence

**Ransom** . . . You know summer has rolled around again when **Marge Savo** dons her baseball cap for her beloved Giants . . . **Mark Bittner**, with book contract and without ponytail, now has his very own parrot, an orange-fronted conure, to join partner **Judy Irving's** cockatiel, **Sweetheart**. Mark rescued the bird from the Filbert steps and named him Filbert, of course . . . **Catz Forsman**, fresh from performing in The Edinburgh Fringe Festival, is scheduled to portray the title role of *King Lear* at the Diego Rivera Theater in November . . . **Jean Mullis** will be opening a run of *Comedy of Errors* at Subterranean Shakespeare in Berkeley beginning at the end of September and running through October 6. Both Catz and Jean will be featured in TIP's presentation of Moliere's *The Imaginary Invalid* next spring . . . **Stuart Kaplan** applauds the **Beautification Committee's** cleanup campaign. Stuart has been known to stop litterbugs and ask that they pick up their mess. You rock, Stuart! . . . **Anne Davis** is a kitty angel, daily feeding the feral cats (all of whom have been neutered or spayed) at Aquatic Park . . . **Tim Keller** has moved to Cambodia. **Karen Kevorgian** replaces him on the THD Board . . . 'Tis the season. Candidates **Steve Williams** (city attorney), **Jeff Adachi** (public defender), and **Paul McConnell** (House of Representatives) schmoozed with THD members at the July dinner at **Caesar's**.



# Summer Scenes



Melissa Cardiff, Sondra Leque, Gerry Crowley, Sandy Oakes, and Norma Walden plot strategy at the Bowling Night with Russian Hill Neighbors. Photo by Suzanne Nelson



Marge Savo and Dawne Bernhardt work the THD booth at the North Beach Fair. Photo by Morton Beebe

# North Beach with Kids

*By Rebecca Taggart Aaland*

“North Beach?” I asked my husband when he suggested we move here. Of course, I loved the restaurants and nightlife North Beach has to offer, but I didn’t think of it as a kid-oriented neighborhood. And with a toddler, when would we get to see the inside of all those places anyway? It wasn’t until after we moved here that I discovered what a wonderful place for kids North Beach is.

After four years here, we have a tremendously supportive community in which to raise our five-year-old and 8-month-old daughters. We met other families through the library’s lap sit programs. Most of those children went on to attend the Telegraph Hill Cooperative Nursery school, and most of my daughter’s fellow preschool graduates will be in the same kindergarten class at Yick Wo Elementary.

Shopkeepers know our children, and we can’t leave the house without running into friends. We have found the close community of a small town coupled with the richness of the big city — a dream come true.

And what neighborhood offers kids more? Take Michelangelo Park, a small urban paradise with a lush garden and a well-maintained playground. The picnic table, set on the deck, boasts a nice view of the Bay. What better place to enjoy a lunch gathered from North Beach’s wonderful Italian delis?

My older daughter loves the parrots, and we regularly visit their favorite magnolia tree on the Greenwich Steps. The Steps have a jungle feel that makes a great adventure for kids, even

if the parrots happen to be away.

Levi’s Plaza, at the bottom of the Greenwich Steps, is another favorite with its two wonderful, interactive fountains. My older daughter and her friends can spend hours playing in the park on sunny days, turning the stepping stones into imaginary boats and rafts.

The Saturday Ferry Plaza Farmers’ Market, just around the corner from Levi’s Plaza, is a mainstay in our lives. We always run into friends, and the kids play on the grass and find hiding places among the giant ferns. The fruit-flavored honey sticks are a must for our kids.

The North Beach pool is another neighborhood treasure. We take advantage of swim lessons in the summer (only \$1 per class!) and preschool swim all year ‘round. The wonderful, friendly staff knows my children by name. It will be hard to lose access to the pool during renovations, but we will be first in line when it reopens.

The Shrine of St. Francis of Assisi, the original heart of Italian North Beach, welcomes children at its free classical concerts every Sunday afternoon. City Lights Bookstore unexpectedly has a nice children’s book collection downstairs. The famous murals inside Coit Tower are a colorful way for kids to learn about California history.

We even find ourselves in North Beach’s restaurants more frequently than I ever expected. My older daughter’s favorites include Mo’s, the Gold Spike, Viva, and Cafferata. Instead of worrying whether this is a good neighborhood to raise children, I wish I had grown up in North Beach!

# Goodbye to Peter Macchiarini

**B**eloved North Beach figure and internationally acclaimed jeweler, sculptor, and photographer Peter Macchiarini died July 3 of complications from pneumonia. Peter was 91.

A familiar figure in his trademark beret, Peter had long been a fixture in North Beach, where he was usually found at his studio on Grant Avenue creating distinctive modern jewelry he termed “wearable sculpture.”

In 1953, he and other artists and Grant Avenue merchants started the first artist-run street fair in the U.S.

Other highlights of his long career included celebration as a “Messenger of Modernism” by the Montreal Museum of Modern Art and one-man shows at the California Legion of Honor and the Museo Italo. He won more awards in the San Francisco Art Festival than any other individual artist.

In 2000, the Kearny Street Steps were renamed in his honor. This block was the site of his first studio in 1936.

On June 29, five days before his death, the Board of Supervisors recognized his services to the culture of the city by declaring him a “San Francisco Legend.”

Peter is survived by children Laura Langdon, Nella Macchiarini, and Daniel Macchiarini. Daniel will continue work-

ing in the studio his father founded over a half century ago.

*Peter was interviewed for THD's Oral History project. The transcript of the interview is available at the North Beach Public Library or may be checked out from Audrey Tomaselli, tel. 391-1792.*



Peter Macchiarini at the Steps of Peter Macchiarini  
Photo is from Peter Macchiarini's Christmas card and was donated by Billie Atlas.

*The Semaphore* needs a few good men and women to do small line drawings on neighborhood subjects for space fillers. Please call 392-4081 or e-mail [madartist@redose-gos.com](mailto:madartist@redose-gos.com)

# PROGRAM AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE

*By Suzanne Nelson*

The social year is off to a great start with a variety of activities.

**May:** Hosted by the THD Board of Directors, the Social and Membership Chairs gave a cocktail party at 101 Lombard to introduce THD to our neighbors on the other side of the Hill and invite them to join our organization. It was very well

attended and was a beautiful balmy night on the patio. We have welcomed several new members from that evening.

**June:** Again, the weather contributed to a wonderful evening at beautiful dalla Torre, where we had a very well attended cocktail party to welcome new members from the previous three months. While dalla Torre is not open for dinner right now, you can

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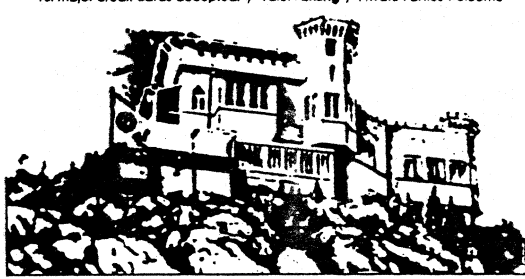
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## PROGRAM AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE *continued from previous page*

hold a private party or function there by calling Lisa Koester at 362-3276. Many of us enjoyed Bruce Pachtman's play, "Don't Make Me Look Too Psychotic" at the Bannam Place Theater. It was nice to have Bruce join us before the play at the wine and cheese reception in the lobby.

### Is this your last Semaphore?

If the mailing label is dated Sept. 1, 2001 or earlier, your membership has lapsed and we hope you'll rectify that situation with a check. If you think our records are incorrect or you are in doubt about your membership status, please contact Membership Chair, Tom Noyes  
Phone 981-8520  
E-mail [tom@noyesfamily.com](mailto:tom@noyesfamily.com)

**July:** We started with something different from our usual events. Our Russian Hill neighbors challenged us to a night of bowling at the Presidio. Those of us who went to the lovely little building, nestled away in our beautiful Presidio, had a great time. In fact, we are planning another challenge in the winter and hope more of you will join the team or just come to cheer and socialize. We ended the month with a lively General Membership Dinner at Caesar's Restaurant. When our speaker Tom Ammiano got caught up in a very long Board of Supervisors meeting, everyone just shifted gears, gave some committee updates and had a great time socializing.

**August:** To help celebrate the 7th Annual North Beach Jazz Festival in conjunction with Jazz on Grant night, members and guests met at Babette, a new boutique at Grant & Green for a wine and cheese party. It

## Planning and Zoning

*continued from page 9*

the Art Institute, but for their architecture and landscaping as one of the last assemblages of turn-of-the-century, small scale cottage housing. The owner of the property is proposing to clear the site and construct luxury condominium units.

## VII. PLANNING DEPARTMENT ENFORCEMENT PROGRAM

At the Planning & Zoning Committee's August 2nd meeting, Lois Scott and Kenneth Chin of the Planning Department Enforcement Team made a presentation of the City's new code enforcement procedures and priorities.

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## PROGRAM AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE *continued from previous page*

was a very successful, lively party with a wide range of attendees, including two sleeping babies. Aaron Peskin and Alistar Monroe (of NBJF) announced a special performance at St. Francis of Assisi, and everyone filed out (with many purchases from Babette) to enjoy the music of the night.

**Stay tuned for:** A special night of **Cocktails, Art and Music** at the San Francisco Art Institute. **Want to dance?** The Italian Athletic Club is offering Wednesday night Tango classes taught by Jacelyn and Roberto Riobo. If you already Tango, just come after class and pay \$5 at the door and dance the

night away. Swing and Ballroom will probably be offered on another evening. Please call or email me for more information. **Cooking classes**, with a shared meal afterwards, are being looked into. Join other THD members and feel like you are part of the **Italian Heritage Parade** from shady sidewalk seats at a North Beach restaurant. Seating will be limited so get your checks in as soon as you receive the notice. More information on these and other events will be coming soon. Check your email or mailboxes to join in the fun.

Remember, Social Committee welcomes new members and ideas of other things you would like to see offered. Contact me: [suzanne\\_nelson@yahoo.com](mailto:suzanne_nelson@yahoo.com) or 986-6210. See you at the next event!

## Shipping of Myrick Book Nears

As almost everyone who has lived on Telegraph Hill for long knows, *San Francisco's Telegraph Hill* by David Myrick is a collector's item. The out-of-print first edition of this book, lovingly detailing the colorful history of the Hill, sells for \$200 these days.

Last year, David agreed to make revisions to the original, and THD agreed to sponsor the second edition of the Myrick book. The new volume includes 32 new pages and 50 more photographs.

To order your book, please fill out the order form below. The shipment date is now scheduled for October.

To order *San Francisco's Telegraph Hill* 2nd edition

\_\_\_\_ number of copies at \$27.06 per copy (NOTE: \$27.06 is the discounted price for the first 400 copies sold. Copies are going fast—and we advise you to mail your checks soon to take advantage of the discount.) Prices after the discount expires will be \$37.89. The above prices include Calif. sales tax.

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We anticipate that copies of *San Francisco's Telegraph Hill* will be shipped in October 2001. If you have any questions, please write Telegraph Hill Dwellers or call (415) 255-6799.

# Hill Dwellers Go to the "Flatlands"

By Marilyn K. Breen

**O**n a balmy May 7 evening, 101 Lombard was the site of a cocktail party given to introduce residents of the North Waterfront to the Telegraph Hill Dwellers.

It was the belief of the Board of Directors that the residents along the base of the hill had not been actively recruited in the past. This is a large and growing community within the district of the Hill Dwellers, and it is important to include this area when we talk about the "Hill."

Gloria Smith, newest member of the THD Board of Directors and a "flatlander" herself, suggested the idea and Suzanne Nelson (Social Chair) coordinated the event. Since Gloria is a resident of 101 Lombard, it was decided that the club room/patio would be the perfect setting for such a party. Once Gloria was able to book a date for the use of the facility, Suzanne and her committee got busy and sent out 300 invitations to non-members of THD who reside in the immedi-

ate area. 150-156 Lombard, 111 Chestnut, and 101 Lombard were targeted.

The result was 75 to 100 potential THD members joined together to enjoy some lovely catering, taste some wine and meet with members of the Board. The catering was provided by the Social Committee while several Board members circulated with information and generally acted as able hosts/hostesses.

Aaron Peskin, former THD Board President, was on hand to welcome the attendees and introduce himself as their Supervisor. He encouraged them to become active and take part in the social activities as well as the civic involvement of the organization.

A few new members were signed up at the party itself and a great deal of interest was generated. Board President Gerry Crowley said this was the first time THD has done this kind of outreach and declared it "a success."

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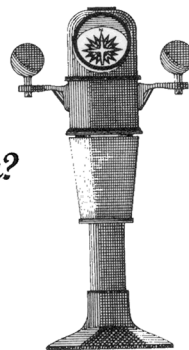
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# Eating Through Telegraph Hill and Environs with GraceAnn's Mangia North Beach

By Steve Thomas

“**T**he reason you are here today, sampling a wide variety of yummy treats, is precisely because this is a neighborhood of mom and pop stores, a neighborhood where we’ve fought to keep out the chain stores like Starbucks,” announces GraceAnn Walden, standing before her gaggle of tourists in front of the Ben & Jerry’s on Columbus Avenue.

Not a contradiction, however, since GraceAnn is quick to add that, after all, the politically correct B&J firm, based a continent away in Vermont, does offer some of the country’s best ice cream, and as chain stores go, it’s one she’s willing to tolerate. “Besides,” she says “there are some times when you just need a little Cherry Garcia.”

The Mangia North Beach tour juggles a number of apparent contradictions, offering explanations and clarifications for such neigh-

borhood myths as the name Little City and the common misconception that local hero Joe DiMaggio was married to Marilyn Monroe at Sts. Peter and Paul Church.

“Many of the Italians who settled in this part of San Francisco – this was known at one time as the Latin Quarter – did so because there were French and Greeks and other people from the Mediterranean settled here. So it was natural for them to want to be around other Europeans; but they came here with no intention of staying. What they created here in North Beach is what they called Little City. A lot of the people from Lucca opened stores here. A little history of Lucca: Lucca was always fighting with its neighbors; a walled, confined central city. So after a while people got tired of that and moved here through the port of Genoa. You could live your whole life here without speaking English, a city within the city, the

*continued on next page*

## NERT Alert

Now’s the time to learn how to cope with disaster—free Neighborhood Emergency Response Team (NERT) training starts Tuesday, October 2, at 6:30 p.m. in the auditorium of Francisco Middle School, Powell and Francisco.

The 6 classes last 2- 2-1/2 hours, and if you happen to miss one, you can make it up in another neighborhood or at a later date. You’ll learn hands-on disaster skills that will help you survive the first 72 hours after disaster strikes. Bring your neighbors! To sign up, call 558-3459.

## Town Hall Meeting in October

Supervisor Aaron Peskin will conduct a town hall meeting, Saturday, October 20, from 10:00 to 12:00 at the Gordon J. Lau Elementary School Auditorium, 950 Clay (at Stockton).

The Departments of Police, Fire, Public Works, MUNI, and Recreation and Parks will be available to answer questions and resolve concerns.

In the past, the Supervisor’s meetings have proved a fast track to getting problems solved.

## GraceAnn's Mangia North Beach *continued*

Little City. Known as the prominente, the Little City leaders were from Lucca, Liguria and Genoa. By 1861, Italy was united again and immigration slowed, but when depression hit near the turn of the century, a lot of people from Sicily were soon coming over as well."

At the Panelli Brothers, an Italian deli, we meet Rich and Rob, the Panelli twins, whose family traces its ancestry from Lucca. We learn that the best imported Parmesan cheese comes from morning milk because it contains more

cream and butterfat. They point to another kind of Parmesan. "This one comes from Rocca cows, the auburn kind, your red heads."

"The redheads stand out," adds GraceAnn, twinkling her eyes under her strawberry tresses, a silver platter in her hands. She's distributing the first of many "tastes" throughout the tour: an Italian appetizer of imported prosciutto wrapped around fresh mozzarella cheese.

As the tour group noshes on the treat, GraceAnn and the Panellis swap tips and



GraceAnn distributes the first of many "tastes" throughout her tour: Panelli's imported prosciutto wrapped around fresh mozzarella cheese.

Photo by Steve Thomas.

## GraceAnn's Mangia North Beach *continued*

vignettes about the various ingredients that make up the wonderful Italian diet, and the tasty recipes that GraceAnn passes out as her walking tour guide. On tomatoes – we pick our tomatoes much too early in the US. The San Marzano tomatoes are picked ripe so the sugar content is just right. That's why Mama has to add sugar to a sauce made with American tomatoes. Pasta – the best is imported semolina. Parmesan – grate it and use it, or freeze it, but do not let it sit in the 'fridge.

As the group passes by Little City meat market on Vallejo, we learn how to make GraceAnn's Veal Chops with Herbs. The veal from Little City Meats is a little older, richer in taste than the pale, milk-fed veal served in some restaurants.

We are told that the St. Francis of Assisi church, rebuilt from the inside out after the Great Earthquake and Fire, also survived the Archdiocese's closure of 11 churches in 1989 only because the Franciscan Friars re-opened it as a shrine. This means that although Mass is celebrated, you cannot be married, or buried from there.

Next taste is O'Reilly's, where the bar maids offer the group a spot of Guinness and soda bread. On the way down Columbus Avenue, GraceAnn points out Graffeo Coffee and adds that it's one of three family-owned, indigenous coffee roasting companies in North Beach (Caffé Trieste and Caffé Roma, the other two). Then she introduces us to Jean Marc's XOX Truffles, which turns out to be the highlight of this group's tour, judging by the gross tonnage of melt-in-your mouth chocolate consumed and ordered for later consumption.

Standing in front of the imposing façade of

Sts. Peter and Paul church, the saga of Joltin' Joe unfolds. The Salesian Boys Club was formed at the turn of the century to keep the juveniles from pool halls and petty theft, and Joe's family – like many Sicilians who helped make Fisherman's Wharf famous during the influx – settled in the neighborhood when he was three years old. Joe DiMaggio went to the Catholic schools here, taking advantage of the Boys Club programs offered, and of course was soon recognized as a great athlete. When he was married at Sts. Peter and Paul in 1939, he was married to Dorothy Arnold, a blonde starlet. Thousands of people filled the streets. In comparison, his funeral here was very private, with fewer than 100 people.

Some tour operators will say this is where Joe married Marilyn Monroe. Since both of them had been married and divorced, that never would have happened in those days. What they did was get married at City Hall, and then they came here for a publicity shot on the front steps of the church's Romanesque façade.

The final nosh before lunch is at Liguria Bakery, where the group gets a close-up look at the antique ovens and the time-honored process that results in the neighborhood's most cherished daily bread: focaccia.

Lunch is a multi-course deal at Cobalt Tavern featuring Baccala Mantecato, a cod and potato pate; fresh California greens and grilled asparagus; a Parmesan risotto to die for, and melt-in-your mouth crème brûlée.

For native and neophyte alike, Mangia North Beach is a real treat. Contact GraceAnn at [gaw@graceannwalden.com](mailto:gaw@graceannwalden.com) or (415) 397-8530.

# The Wild Parrots of Telegraph Hill

## READ THE BOOK! SEE THE MOVIE!

*By Judy Irving*

**M**ark Bittner just signed a contract with Harmony/Random House to write a 250-page nonfiction memoir of his six-year relationship with the wild parrots. Meanwhile, as many Telegraph Hill donors know, I've been working on a documentary film about Mark and the birds. During the negotiations with the publisher, I agreed to hold back the film's release until the book comes out, so that both will benefit from a coordinated publicity campaign. I felt that this was a wise marketing choice, even though it means the film won't be coming out as soon as I'd planned.

We also agreed to call the book and film by the same title: "The Wild Parrots of Telegraph Hill." (The film used to be "The Wild Parrots of San Francisco" and the book was "Tales From an Urban Jungle: The Wild Parrots of Telegraph Hill.")

By the time you read this, I will have filmed the last two of seven funny urban legends about how the flock got started, and will have almost everything I need to edit a feature-length documentary, except for good slow-motion flying shots, which are remarkably difficult to capture! (I've tried atop Julius Castle many times, and the parrots always delay their best aerial acrobatics until we've packed up the camera and are walking downstairs . . .)

Since Mark has until the end of 2002 to fin-

ish the manuscript, and Harmony then has up to a year and a half to publish the book, I'd advise all film donors and friends: Don't hold your breath. But what a party we can have when this 'wild in the city' Bohemian nature/culture pair comes out!

Meanwhile, drop by my office in the Maybeck Building (1736 Stockton Street, Suite 2) and I'll show you a scene or two as I'm editing. Thanks again for your support. I'll be back in touch to invite you to a rough-cut screening.

### **Sean O'Donnell Handyman**

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# THD Board Resolutions

## February

The Board agreed to withdraw its opposition to the liquor license at 1351 Grant, in exchange for which the building owner will agree to allow the elderly tenants to continue to live in the upstairs apartments.

## March

The Board agreed to join Russian Hill Neighbors and endorse the landmarking of cottages at 1338 Filbert.

The Board agreed to send a letter to the Port Commission supporting neither Chelsea Piers nor the Mills Corp. because each project has significant drawbacks and because traffic and environmental difficulties that would be created by both projects have been underestimated. The resolution affirmed THD's desire and willingness to influence and improve the development of the services and facilities of whomever is selected.

## April

The Board reaffirmed that 65 is the age for senior membership and that senior rates are \$15.00 for individuals and \$30 for senior households.

The Board agreed to allocate \$1500 to the Telegraph Hill Neighborhood Center for the next fiscal year.

The Board agreed to approve the 2001-2 THD budget.

The Board agreed to send a letter to the Port Commission regarding development of Piers 27-31, affirming its previous position as stated in the March letter to the Port (see above) and expressing concern (i) that cumulative environmental and transportation impacts should be studied

and considered, (ii) that design proposals should address the Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings of the Secretary of the Interior, and (iii) that discussions with the developer should be conducted in open session to the maximum extent possible so that the public can influence aspects of the proposed design.

**May:** No resolutions

**June:** No resolutions

**July:** No meeting

## A Third Pome

*By John D. Dolan*

One alert robin  
at 3 a.m. in the dark  
hopped onto and stopped  
upon the sidewalk  
at Washington Square Park.

Seizing the moment I stopped too  
to see exactly  
what that robin would do.

Our connection was broken  
when, flashing lights, a car sped by  
and that robin flew off  
to those poplars reaching to the sky  
all around Ben.

(Thank you, Maggie Bayliss.)

And this: one robin stopping  
and hopping suggested,  
for sure, there's more to North Beach  
than shopping.

# THD Welcomes New Members

## New THD Members, April 2001 to July 2001

Mail Boxes, Etc., Yvonne Baker, Nicolas Boullet, Ursula Bussfeld, Melissa Cardiff, Courtney Clarkson, Charles Daly, Al & Mari Alice Dockus, Kathy Duun, Frederic C. Fegley, Mary Kay Kew & John Fitzgerald, Jeffrey O. Graham, Holly Huebel, Paul Iracki, Stepanie Jensen, Charlie Kanavel, Sanyu Kiruluta, Steven Klot, Robert A. Kozlowski, Toni Kramer, Shyamli & Ram Kumar, Chris Larsen, Laura & Dennis Leuer, Evelyn Levin, Patricia & Anthony Ley, Mike Madrid, Whitney & Scott Marx, Staci McLaughlin, Jan Murphy, Wilma Pang, Fred & Elaine Park, Judy Pritchard, Christine & Shawn Rose, Maxine & Marshall Schulman, Joe Shakarchi, Lorraine Sherrill, Valentina Simi, Robert Nyden & Beverly Sutton, Sherry Tansley, Jonathan West, Amana Ayour & Christopher White.

***For a Voice in Your Neighborhood Join Telegraph Hill Dwellers.***

## NEW MEMBER INFORMATION

Sign Up or Sign a Friend Up as a member of Telegraph Hill Dwellers.

Complete and mail to THD, PO Box 330159, SF, CA 94133

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY: \_\_\_\_\_

STATE: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

CHECK ENCLOSED FOR 1-YEAR MEMBERSHIP

Individual \$25 \_\_\_\_ Household \$40 \_\_\_\_ Senior (age 65 and over) \$15 \_\_\_\_

# THD COMMITTEES NEED YOU

**You can make a difference! Join one of THD's committees, meet and work with your fellow Hill Dwellers to improve life on the Hill.**

## STANDING COMMITTEES

**Parking and Transportation.** Chair, Bill Seelinger, 392-8450. Promotes efforts to ease congestion, optimize white zones, upgrade public transportation. Works with Department of Parking and Traffic.

**Planning and Zoning.** Chair Nancy Shanahan, 986-7094. Monitors and reviews proposed development projects for consistency with applicable City ordinances. Works with Planning Department staff and represents THD before the Landmarks Board, Planning Commission, Zoning Administrator and other regulating bodies to protect historic resources and maintain neighborhood character. Assists members to learn more about and participate in planning and zoning issues.

**Semaphore.** Editor Cheryl Bentley, 392-4081. The editor and staff produce a quarterly magazine for THD members.

**Program.** Chair Suzanne Nelson, 986-6210. Arranges social events, including quarterly membership meetings and get-acquainted social functions.

**Budget.** Maya Armour, 986-1474. As prescribed in bylaws for Treasurer.

**Membership.** Chair Tom Noyes, 981-8520. As prescribed in bylaws for Financial Secretary.

## SPECIAL COMMITTEES AND PROJECTS

**Parks and Trees.** Chair Julie Christensen, 552-7774. email [julie@surfaces.com](mailto:julie@surfaces.com). Information and projects concerning local parks, green spaces and street trees.

**Neighborhood Beautification** Jan Holloway, 398-2055. Creates opportunities to improve, beautify, and preserve the Hill. Through its awards program, recognizes individuals and businesses who enhance our neighborhood. Facilitates cleanup, gardening and graffiti removal.

**Oral History Project** Chair Art Peterson. 956-7817. Taped interviews provide historical documentation of living and working in the neighborhood.

**Pioneer Park Improvement Project.** Chair Howard Wong, 982-5055. Work party volunteers enhance the open space around Coit Tower, improving accessibility and safety through planning, landscaping work parties and fundraising.

**THD Web Page.** Webmaster Peter Overmire, 989-3945. Shared information about meetings, local concerns and events.

## LIAISONS WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

**Coalition for San Francisco Neighborhoods.** Representative Gerry Crowley, 781-4201. City-wide organization interacts with other neighborhoods to discuss common problems.

**N.E.R.T.** June Fraps, 392-1187. Energizes members to take emergency disaster response training program sponsored by the City.

## WEB SITE = [www.thd.org](http://www.thd.org)

That's Us! Pete Overmire (989-3945), a longtime THDer and former officer has set up this site for Telegraph Hill Dwellers. Access it to see the sensational look he has created, impressive to local and international browsers alike. Lend him photographs and graphics relevant to the Hill that he can scan in. Call or e-mail information about upcoming meetings in the neighborhood and at City agencies, and ideas and concerns you want the rest of us to know about between Semaphores.

# GLORIA SMITH

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## T H D   C A L E N D A R

**2nd Saturday Stair & Garden Work Parties, October 13, November 17, December 8th.** Meet at Pioneer Park. For more information call 552-7774.

### SEPTEMBER

20—Art & Music Party at San Francisco Art Institute  
30—City Lights Block Party

### OCTOBER

2—NERT training, 6:30, Francisco Middle School  
7—Italian Heritage Parade  
11—New Members Cocktail

### Party

20—Town Hall meeting, Lau Elementary School, 620 Filbert

### NOVEMBER

5—General Membership Dinner Meeting

### DECEMBER

9—Holiday Party at Julius' Castle

Dates and locations subject to change.

### Schedules of Committee Meetings

**PLANNING & ZONING:** First Thursdays. Call for time and location. 986-7070.

**PARKING & TRANSPORTATION:** 2nd Saturdays at 11 AM at Little City Restaurant, Union and Powell Streets.

For more information, log on to  
<http://www.thd.org>

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